

CLAIMS

1. A pool table system that allows a user to play pool upon receipt of a playing fee, said system comprising:

a pool table having a playing surface, rails, pockets, a ball holding rack that retains pool balls, and an activation-sensing unit; and

a remote activation assembly having a processor operatively connected to a currency acceptor, wherein said remote activation assembly transmits an activation signal that is received by said activation-sensing unit when said processor detects receipt of the playing fee, and wherein said activation-sensing unit is operable to allow a user to access said pool balls when said activation-sensing unit receives the activation signal.

2. The system of claim 1, further comprising:

ball return passages within said pool table that connect said pockets with said ball holding rack;

a scoring processor; and

a ball detection sensor in communication with said scoring processor and located proximate a portion of at least one of said ball return passages,

wherein each of said pool balls includes an embedded detectable device, and wherein said ball detection sensor detects said embedded detectable devices as said pool balls pass by said ball detection sensor, and wherein said ball detection sensor relays a data signal to said scoring processor as said pool balls pass by said ball detection sensor.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein said activation-sensing unit is operatively connected to a gate positioned at an end of said holding rack, wherein said activation-sensing unit acts to open said gate when said activation-sensing unit receives said activation signal.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein said currency acceptor is adapted to receive coins and bills.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said remote activation assembly is mounted on a wall.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein said remote activation assembly is supported by a floor.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein at least one of said remote activation assembly and said activation-sensing unit further comprises an antenna that wirelessly receives power signals from a commercial radio station.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein said activation signal is a radio frequency signal.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein said pool table is one of a standard pool, billiards, bumper pool and snooker table.

10. A method for initiating game play on a pay-for-play pool table having a playing surface, rails, pockets, a ball holding rack that retains pool balls, and an internal activation-sensing unit, said method comprising:

depositing a game play fee into a remote activation assembly;

remotely transmitting an activation signal once the game play fee is deposited;

receiving the activation signal at the internal activation-sensing unit; and

providing access to the pool balls upon said receiving step.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said providing access comprises opening a gate positioned at an end of said ball holding rack in order to allow the pool balls to pass therethrough.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein said depositing comprises depositing at least one of bills and coins into the remote activation assembly.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein the remote activation assembly is mounted on a wall.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the remote activation assembly is supported by a floor.

15. The method of claim 10, further comprising providing power to at least one of the remote activation assembly and activation-sensing unit through signals received from a commercial radio station.

16. The method of claim 10, wherein the activation signal is a radio frequency signal.

17. The method of claim 10, wherein the pool table is one of a standard pool, billiards, bumper pool and snooker table.

18. A pool table system that is configured to automatically score a pool-based game, said system comprising a pool table comprising:

a playing surface, rails, pockets, and pool balls, wherein each of said pool balls comprise a detectable feature;

a scoring processor; and

a ball detection sensor in communication with said scoring processor, said ball detection sensor being positioned such that said pool balls pass by said ball detection sensor after said pool balls enter said pockets, wherein said ball detection sensor detects said detectable features as said pool balls pass by said ball detection sensor, and wherein

said ball detection sensor relays a data signal to said scoring processor as said pool balls pass by said ball detection sensor.

19. The system of claim 18, wherein said scoring processor updates a score of a game according to a received data signal.

20. The system of claim 18, wherein said pool table system is a pay-for-play pool table system.

21. The system of claim 18, wherein each of said detectable features outputs a unique signal for each of said pools balls.

22. The system of claim 18, wherein said detectable feature comprises at least one of an antenna, microchip, metallic security tag, magnet, and an ultrasonic emitter embedded within said pool ball.

23. The system of claim 18, wherein said scoring processor distinguishes among said pool balls based on the data signals received.

24. The system of claim 18, wherein said detectable feature outputs one of a radiofrequency signal, an ultrasonic signal, and an electromagnetic field that is detected by said ball detection sensor.

25. The system of claim 18, wherein said detectable feature is a unique marking on said pool ball, and said ball detection sensor is an optical sensor.

26. The system of claim 18, further comprising a scoring display operatively connected to said scoring processor, said scoring processor displaying a game score on said scoring display.

27. The system of claim 18, wherein the pool-based game is at least one of standard pool, billiards, bumper pool and snooker.

28. A method of automatically scoring a pool-based game played on a pool table comprising a playing surface, rails, pockets, and pool balls having embedded detectable devices therein, said method comprising:

locating a ball detection sensor at a position where the pool balls pass after the pool balls enter the pockets;

detecting the embedded detectable devices within the pool balls as the pool balls pass by the ball detection sensor; and

relaying a data signal based on the detecting to a scoring processor.

29. The method of claim 28, further comprising updating a score of the pool-based game according to the data signal received.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein each of the embedded detectable devices outputs a unique signal for each of the pools balls.

31. The method of claim 28, further comprising distinguishing among the pool balls based on the received data signals.

32. A method of manufacturing a pool game system that is configured to automatically score a pool-based game, wherein the pool game system comprises a pool table having pool balls positioned over a playing surface bounded by rails and pockets, said method comprising:

embedding detectable devices within the pool balls, wherein each of the pool balls includes one embedded detectable device that outputs a signal that is unique from output signals of other detectable devices embedded in other pool balls.

33. The method of claim 32, further comprising disposing ball detecting sensors configured to detect the detectable devices at a position where the pool balls pass after the pool balls enter the pockets.

34. A pay-for-play parlor game system that enables game play upon receipt of a playing fee, said system comprising:

a game unit having a playing surface and an activation-sensing unit; and

a remote activation assembly having a processor operatively connected to a currency acceptor, wherein said remote activation assembly transmits an activation signal that is received by said activation-sensing unit when said processor detects receipt of the playing fee, and wherein said activation-sensing unit is operable to allow a user to initiate game play when said activation-sensing unit receives the activation signal.

35. The pay-for-play parlor game system of claim 34, wherein said game unit is a pool table.

36. The pay-for-play parlor game system of claim 34, wherein said game unit is at least one of a foosball table, an air hockey table, a basketball-based game, a football based game, and a hockey-based game.